

## **THE BOOK OF HEBREWS REFUTES CALVINIST THEOLOGY**

February 8, 2006 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

The book of Hebrews refutes the Calvinist or TULIP doctrines of unconditional and “sovereign” election and irresistible grace, that God sovereignly and arbitrarily chooses who will be saved and irresistibly and absolutely draws them so that on one hand it is impossible for the non-elect to be saved and on the other hand it is impossible for the elect not to be saved. If this were true, the Holy Spirit would not give such dire warnings and exhortations to professing believers about the possibility of apostasy, because if they are elected they could not possibly perish and if they are not elected, nothing they could do would change their status.

Consider, for example, the following passages:

Consider Hebrews 2:3: “How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.”

This exhortation makes no sense in light of Calvinist doctrines. If election is as the Calvinist teaches and it is a matter of an individual being sovereignly chosen by God, how could the elect neglect salvation and how could the non-elect do anything other than neglect salvation?

Consider Hebrews 3:12-14: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.”

If the elect are predetermined “sovereignly” and if election has nothing whatsoever to do with the sinner himself and if he is irresistibly drawn and sovereignly kept so that he surely perseveres, what could this exhortation possibly mean? How could the sovereignly elected, irresistibly drawn elect depart from God, and how could the non-elect do anything other than depart from God?

Consider Hebrews 4:9-11: “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

How could this exhortation possibly apply to TULIP type election? This passage says the rest of salvation is something that every person must seek to enter into and all are urged to do so, but the doctrine of “sovereign” election teaches us that those elected to God’s rest are predetermined solely by God and they have no choice in the matter and will assuredly enter into His rest.

Consider Hebrews 6:4-6: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

If TULIP theology is true, why the exhortation? How could the elect fall away? And how could the non-elect do anything but fall away?

Consider Hebrews 10:26-29: “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?”

Again, if TULIP theology is true, why would such an exhortation be given to professing believers? If they are sovereignly elected, they will surely persevere and if they aren’t they surely won’t. According to Calvinist doctrine, it has nothing to do with them or what they do.

If election is “sovereign” and “unconditional” in a Calvinist sense and the believer has no choice whatsoever in the matter of salvation, these passages don’t make any sense.

If, on the other hand, election involves an element of foreknowledge (1 Pet. 1:2) and involves a personal choice on the part of the sinner (“whosoever believeth,” Jn. 3:15, 16; 12:46; Acts 10:43; Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 John 5:1; Rev. 22:17; etc.), the exhortations and warnings in Hebrews make perfect sense. Because if this is true, and we know that it is because the Bible everywhere teaches it, then the sinner, being given light from Christ (Jn. 1:9) and being drawn by Christ (Jn. 12:32) and being convicted and enlightened by the Holy Spirit (Jn. 16:8) can, because of this gracious divine enablement, either believe on Christ or not and it is also possible for a sinner to come close to salvation without actually possessing it. Therefore he needs to be exhorted to believe on Jesus Christ truly and sincerely and not to turn away before he has been genuinely born again and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and adopted into God’s family.

For more on this subject see “The Calvinism Debate” at <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/calvinismdebate.html>.

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